DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 086 PS 027 556

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TITLE The Classification and Understanding of Korean Proverbs Representing a Parent-Child Relationship.
PUB DATE 1999-04-00
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Albuquerque, NM, April 15-18, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Change; Child Rearing; Foreign Countries; *Parent Child Relationship; Predictor Variables; *Proverbs; Social Attitudes; *Social Change; *Social Values
IDENTIFIERS Koreans; *South Korea

ABSTRACT

This study investigated Koreans' understanding of and agreement with Korean proverbs concerning the parent-child relationship. Ninety-five proverbs were selected from literature and categorized into nine areas: value of a child, affection toward a child, boy-preference, positive or negative affection toward a daughter, importance of a child's education, difficulty of child rearing, parent's identification, the value of discipline, and filial piety. Over 400 married Koreans were asked if they had any understanding of each proverb and to rate the degree to which they agreed with its underlying value. Findings indicated that subjects showed a high level of understanding of proverbs representing affection toward a child, importance of a child's education, and filial piety; the degree of agreement tended to be relatively high but varied with subjects' demographic variables. Age and education were particularly influential variables with all proverbs. Older subjects tended to agree with expressing affection toward a child, the difficulty of child rearing, preferring boys, and authoritative control and filial piety. They tended to rate low the value of children and daughters. (EV)

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The Classification and Understanding of Korean Proverbs Representing a Parent-Child Relationship

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I. Introduction

Proverb, which are defined as 'the wisdom of many, the wit of one'(Dundes, 1981), are figurative expression that capture the shared beliefs and values of a society(Nippold & Haq, 1996). The proverbs related to childrearing will contain the cultural images of children and reflect on their functions(Palacios, 1996).

In Korea, many proverbs representing a parent-child relationship have been passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Some of these proverbs are well received by the public, while some others run counter to modern societal values. Thus, we think that to examine the public level of understanding and agreement about Korean proverbs representing a parent-child relationship will provide a useful information to find the change of traditional values about parent-child relationships.

The purpose of this study was to gather from literature and categorize proverbs representing a parent-child relationships and to investigate the level of understanding and agreement on the selected proverbs. And also, the relationships between demographic variables and the agreement on the parent-child relations as depicted in Korean proverbs were analyzed.

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Ⅱ. Method

1. Measurement

Korean proverbs representing a parent-child relationship were gathered from literature. Among them, 95 proverbs were selected for this study. The proverbs were categorized into nine areas by their meaning. The categories were followings ; value of a child(13), affection toward a child(14), boy-preference(6), positive or negative affection toward a daughter(14), importance of a child's education(5), difficulty of child rearing(12), parent's identification(7), the value of discipline(10), and filial piety(12).

The subjects were asked to answer whether they have any understanding of each proverb, and then(if they know) to rate the degree to which they agree on the underlying value of each proverb(5-point scale).

2. Subjects and procedure

The subjects were married people living in Korea. The data were collected through a questionnaire, telephone and in-person interview, and their age and education were considered in sampling. The final subject used in analysis were 447(223 married men and 224 married women).

Ⅲ. Results

<Table 1> lists some proverbs in order of increasing unfamiliarity, and the degree of agreement for the proverbs. Of the 95 proverbs used in this study, **subjects' level of understanding** ranged widely from 15.2 to 97.5 %.

The level of agreement on the meaning of proverbs tended to be little high(M=2.57~4.50). In the case of boy-preference, the degree of agreement was

relatively high, and there were significant differences by age, education, gender and religion. Concerning the value of discipline, people tended to place relatively high value on the strict discipline, varied according to the demographic variables such as age, education and religion. Proverbs, which represent affection toward a child, difficulty of child rearing, filial piety, showed relatively high level of agreement, and there were significant differences by age and education(<table 1>, < table2>). But in the case of the proverbs, which emphasize the value of child and importance of child's education, there were no significant differences according to related variables.

< Table 2 > The level of agreement on the meaning of proverbs by age (one-way Anova)

category / age group	boy-preference	the value of discipline	filial piety
below 35	17.02	19.92	30.53
35-49	17.83	20.89	31.14
50-59	21.25	22.85	32.13
over 60	22.57	22.15	33.08
	F=17.87***	F=4.15*	F=5.00**

*p < .05 **P<.01 ***P<.001

< Table 3 > The level of agreement on the meaning of proverbs by education(one-way Anova)

category / education group	boy-preference	the value of discipline	filial piety
college & graduate	17.99	20.37	31.75
high school	19.27	21.37	31.09
middle junior	23.31	23.00	32.13
elementary	22.96	23.17	33.80
	F=11.24***	F=3.83*	F=3.40

*p < .05 **P<.01 ***P<.001

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Ⅳ. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study classified Korean proverbs representing a parent-child relationship, and examined the level of understanding and agreement on them to find the change of traditional values about parent-child relationships. Furthermore, the relationships between demographic variables and the agreement on the parent-child relations as depicted in Korean proverbs were analyzed.

The findings indicated that subjects showed little high level of understanding of Korean proverbs representing affection toward a child, importance of a child's education, filial piety. The degree of agreement tended to be relatively high in all of the categories. Furthermore the responses of subjects varied as demographic variables. Especially, the influencing variables in all domain of proverbs were age and education. Older people tended to express the affection toward a child and difficulty of child rearing, to prefer boys and to agree with authoritative control and filial piety. They tended to rate low on the value of children and daughter. But in the case of the proverbs, which emphasize the importance of child's education, there was no significant difference in results according to related variables. It means that there exists a common ground for all Koreans on this matter, regardless of gender and age.

This study revealed that older people have the traditional attitudes about children and child rearing through the analysis of the proverbs referring to boy-preference, the value of discipline and filial piety. It could be concluded that proverbs are measurable reflections of the individual's beliefs

<Table 1> Proverbs related to boy-preference, the value of discipline and filial piety

Category	Proverbs	Familiarity (%)	Mean agreement rating(with SD)
Boy preference	1. Married daughters take everything from their parent's house.	91.9	3.82(.90)
	2. All the married daughters are thieves because they always come back to parents for more	88.1	3.34(1.10)
	3. A daughter is to devout herself to her husband's family	75.2	3.75(.92)
	4. When you have a son, nobody will look down upon you.	74.8	3.51(1.17)
	5. A married son is a somewhat stranger but a married daughter is a complete stranger.	72.2	3.47(1.11)
The value of discipline	1. If you give sweet to children you are not doing them any good, but if you spank them it leads to good discipline.	90.8	3.62(1.00)
	2. A child who is spanked has more respect for his/her parents.	83.0	3.61(1.03)
	3. Only child is easy to be spoiled.	74.2	3.35(1.12)
	4. A child who is spoiled disrespects his/her parents.	73.6	3.69(.97)
Filial piety	1. Only after having own child, people know their parents' pains.	97.5	4.50(.61)
	2. Sparing rods ruins a child.	87.9	3.87(.96)
	3. No dutiful children lasts when parents' illness gets longer.	93.1	3.97(.92)
	4. One parent can take care of ten children but ten children cannot take care of one parent.	85.5	4.06(.83)
	5. A child's highest filial piety grows grass on the rock.	77.2	3.95(.88)

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